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~~SECURITY INFORMATION~~

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

4 December 1952

SUBJECT: SE-34: CONSEQUENCES OF AN ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW
THE PRESENT REGIME IN ALBANIA (Draft for Board
Consideration)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the consequences of an attempt to overthrow
the present regime in Albania.

CONCLUSIONS

(to be written)

DISCUSSION

I. THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. There is widespread dissatisfaction in Albania with
the present regime. Even within the Albanian Government and
the Albanian Communist Party, a loss of confidence in the long-
term prospects of the regime and an increased sense of personal
insecurity appear to have developed.

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2. Recent reports indicate that resistance activity in Albania has increased, in part as a result of increased activity by emigre elements, some of them supported by Western governments. Rumors and reports of plans for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime have been widely circulated. Most of the European intelligence services, including those of the USSR and Albania, are probably aware of connections of the emigres with Western governments and probably believe that some sort of plan for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime is in the making.

3. Both the USSR and the present Albanian leaders have demonstrated sensitivity and uneasiness over this situation and have publicly accused the West, and especially the US, of "organizing provocations" against Albania.

4. The USSR almost certainly desires to keep Albania within the Soviet bloc, even though it is an economic liability and an indefensible outpost. Loss of Albania would be a serious blow to Soviet prestige. The Soviet leaders could not accept the loss of Albania without an implicit confession of either inability or unwillingness to fight for its friends and the preservation of its influence. Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders have not made any inflexible commitments to the Hoxha regime. Unlike the other European Satellites (except East Germany), Albania does not have a mutual assistance pact with the USSR. It has such a pact only with Bulgaria.

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5. Of Albania's three nearest neighbors — Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy — each probably prefers a continuance of the status quo to a change which would be favorable to any of the others.

6. Of the three, Yugoslavia appears most sanguine about eventually achieving some change in the Albanian regime favorable to itself. As we estimated in NIE-42/1 (20 October 1952), there are advantages for Yugoslavia in its present policy of applying political pressure against the Albanian regime without directly intervening or precipitating a coup attempt. By continuing their present course, the Yugoslavs can promote the predominance of the Yugoslav-supported group within the Albanian emigre movement. They can undermine order and stability in Albania without serious risk of international complications, while developing contacts with disaffected elements within the Albanian regime. If successful in these efforts, they will have placed themselves in a favorable position to exploit any safe opportunity for intervention or to exercise preponderant influence in any new regime.

7. We believe that the Yugoslavs have no present intention of precipitating a coup against the Hoxha regime. They probably calculate that to do so would create serious dangers to Yugoslavia and seriously weaken its moral and political position. They probably would stage a coup, if they

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thought it could be done without these dangers; they might therefore be willing to cooperate with other powers in a coup attempt at some future date. However, such cooperation probably would be contingent upon sufficient Yugoslav control over the method and nature of the coup attempt to limit the dangers to Yugoslavia and at the same time to provide Yugoslavia a favorable opportunity for eventual domination of the new Albanian regime.

8. The other nations of Western Europe, including the UK, almost certainly prefer the status quo in Albania to the risks which would be involved in an attempt to establish a pro-Western regime. They appear to believe that the present situation in Europe and particularly in the Balkans, unsatisfactory though it is, is one of stability compared with that of the early post-war period. They believe that it would be undesirable deliberately to upset this precarious stability.

II. REACTIONS TO A COUP ATTEMPT

A. Soviet Bloc Reaction

9. It is impossible to estimate with confidence what would be the Soviet Bloc reaction to a coup attempt against the

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Hoxha regime. Much would depend upon the manner and speed in which the coup was carried out, the reactions of other interested powers, and the global situation existing at the time. In NIE-64 (Part II) we estimated in general that during the period ending in mid-1953:

a. The USSR would pursue courses of action designed to frustrate or offset any gain in the Western power position, and

b. If it thought that the security of the USSR were jeopardized by a Western action, it would probably resort to such counteractions as it considered necessary, even though it recognized that such counteractions involved grave risk of global war.

10. If the Soviet intelligence service should learn of a coup plan in advance and in sufficient detail for the USSR to take preventive action, it almost certainly would do so. A variety of preventive actions suggest themselves, from improved security precautions and liquidations within Albania to the despatch of Soviet or Satellite forces by sea or air and shows of force on the Yugoslav and Greek borders. Whatever preventive measures were taken, the Soviet leaders could be expected to

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manage them so as to achieve a maximum of division, suspicion, and mistrust among the NATO countries, the Balkan countries, and within the free world generally. If the USSR did not learn of a planned coup in advance, but the coup was quickly suppressed by the present Albanian regime, much the same situation would obtain, and the USSR would exploit fully the opportunity to spread suspicion and fear in the free world.

11. If a coup was attempted and proved a quick success, the Soviet leaders would be faced with a difficult decision. We are unable to predict with any confidence what course they would choose. Several possibilities present themselves:

a. Global war: We believe it possible, but unlikely, that the Soviet leaders would precipitate global war. If they did so, it would not be because of the Albanian coup, but because they had concluded that (a) the US would move from one local action to another against the Soviet Bloc, and (b) the USSR could counter most effectively by global rather than local action.

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b. Local military retaliation: Regardless of who initiated or supported the coup, the Soviet leaders might conclude that to accept the loss of Albania would open the Soviet Bloc to new and stronger challenges which would result in eventual and serious losses of position. Therefore, even at grave risk of global war, they might direct the European Satellites to invade Yugoslavia (after accusing Yugoslavia of aggression against Albania) with the announced intent of coming to Albania's assistance. They would, in such an event, place serious strains on the North Atlantic coalition, and they might calculate that the West would not come to Yugoslavia's support. While we believe the chances of the USSR following this course are somewhat less than even, we cannot state with confidence that it is improbable.

c. Acceptance of the loss of Albania and retaliation elsewhere: If the Soviet leaders were unwilling to accept the risks of global war which would be implicit in local military retaliation, they would be obliged to accept the loss of Albania. This would not necessarily provoke Soviet retaliation in Berlin,

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Vietnam, Iran, Indochina or elsewhere, but the chances are better than even that the Soviet leaders would, wherever possible, intensify their pressures at vulnerable points in the free world. They might in this manner be able to offset the psychological effect of the Albanian loss by creating new fears and divisions in the West.

d. Acceptance of the loss of Albania and initiation of political counteraction: The Soviet leaders almost certainly would not accept the loss of Albania without some kind of vigorous reaction. If unwilling to assume grave risk of global war or unable to undertake divisionary retaliatory action elsewhere, the USSR at a minimum would intensify its propaganda campaign against the West, exploiting what rifts occurred in connection within the Albanian adventure. It might make shows of force and attempt to divide the West by threats of war. It might, depending upon its assessment of the attitudes of the various member nations, take an appeal to the UN or encourage some uncommitted country to do so. In sum, it would make every effort to exploit even the loss of a Satellite and to demon-

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strate that any Western effort to roll back the Iron Curtain could not be accomplished with impunity.

12. If a coup was attempted, failed to meet with quick success and became a civil war, Soviet opportunities for success in defeating it and exploiting it politically would be very good. Satellite forces could be brought in initially by air and later by sea. Reinforcement of the insurrectionary forces from the outside would be difficult; the emigres are too few in number to fight a civil war and there would be strong sentiment in the West against providing forces.

13. In the long run, if local or global war were avoided, a coup attempt in Albania, whether successful or not, would make little difference in the Soviet attitude toward the West. Already convinced of the West's implacable hostility and of an inevitable struggle for power between the Communist and capitalist worlds, the Soviet leaders would regard the coup attempt merely as a phase of that struggle. It probably would conclude, however, that the West was accelerating the pace of the struggle. It probably would, therefore, intensify its military preparations and improve its war-readiness.

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14. A coup attempt in Albania, particularly if it were successful, would raise hopes within other Satellite countries. It might in some cases provoke premature and futile resistance efforts. It almost certainly would provoke greater security efforts by the Soviet authorities.

B. Greece and Italy

15. Because of their historic interests in Albania, both the Greeks and the Italians would be deeply interested in any coup attempt in Albania. If the Yugoslavs initiated or participated in such a coup, to their own exclusion, the Greeks and Italians would be deeply resentful and would almost certainly make efforts to counteract Yugoslav influence. It is doubtful that they would individually take military action, but they would probably assume that they had been betrayed by their allies, and distrust and suspicion would thenceforth greatly reduce their cooperation in joint efforts to improve the Western security position in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, if the coup in Albania were carried out without Yugoslav participation and under US control, the Italians and Greeks would probably provide a measure of discreet cooperation. Once the new Albanian regime took over, both would initiate efforts to establish influence over it.

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C. Yugoslavia

16. Because of their recent predominance in Albania, their hopes to reestablish dominance in any new regime, and their extreme vulnerability to any Soviet or Satellite retaliation, the Yugoslavs almost certainly regard any attempt to overthrow the Albanian regime as a matter of vital concern to their national interests. If such an attempt were made without Yugoslav advice and consent, proved successful and did not provoke Soviet retaliation, the Yugoslavs would almost certainly make intensive efforts to dominate it. If the coup attempt proved unsuccessful, whether or not Yugoslavia participated, the Yugoslavs would make every effort to prove that they were not party to the scheme.

D. Other European Nations

17. Because of their fear of upsetting the present precarious peace of Europe, the principal Western European powers, if consulted in advance, almost certainly would strongly advise against a coup in Albania. If such a coup were precipitated without their previous advice and consent, the initial popular reaction would be one of fear and resentment. If the coup proved successful and did not, after the first few weeks

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of uncertainty, provoke any serious and identifiable Soviet retaliation, this fear and resentment would probably relax. Some persons, already feeling that US leadership in Europe was undesirable, would be reinforced in that opinion. The governments of Western Europe, caught between popular feelings and their recognition of the need for avoiding division within in the Western coalition, would face difficult parliamentary situations. Most of them probably would be able to continue their policies in support of the North Atlantic alliance, but with more hazards and delays. If the coup proved unsuccessful and the US were clearly identified with it, the US moral and political position in Europe, and probably elsewhere as well, would suffer serious reverses. By and large, regardless of the outcome, there would be a strong feeling among the major Western European powers that too much had been risked for too small a potential gain.

III. PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN ALBANIA IN THE EVENT OF A
SUCCESSFUL COUP

18. Any new regime in Albania, regardless of its leadership, orientation, or outside support, would face sub-

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stantial -- but not insoluble -- internal problems. Solution of the immediate problem, to establish order, would depend upon the satisfactory execution of the coup. If the new leadership was strong and competent, the people generally would probably support it. If the major Western powers, and particularly the US, announced and fulfilled an intention to provide political and economic support to the new regime, popular support almost certainly would be forthcoming.

19. The need for economic support from the US would be a continuing one. According to present estimates, approximately \$18,000,000 dollars a year of outside aid would be required to maintain present low living standards and the present low economic development rate. To keep aid at that figure, it would be necessary to provide Albania with approximately its present level of foreign exchange by purchase of its export production.

20. For some time after the coup regime was installed, the precise political orientation of that regime would probably be in doubt. As noted above, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy would all try to gain some kind of special position or predominance. The Greeks would want a special status for northern

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Epirus, the Italians would want economic concessions, the Yugoslavs would try to infiltrate and eventually to dominate the regime. While there are undoubtedly many Albanians who are patriotic and desirous of following a national policy, Albania, as a small, poor and undeveloped country, has always depended upon some other power for support and protection. Its final orientation would be in the direction of that supporting power.

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